



# Mid-life crisis?

Relax. If your current grass machinery doesn't look like lasting the year, you could turn a crisis into an opportunity and buy a new model says Malcolm Bates



## A good idea

The Italian Ibea brand might not be familiar to Countryside members – especially as more dealerships still need to be appointed in some parts of the UK. Should we judge that as an opportunity, or a problem? Having spent some time using the newly-introduced Ibea 'Idea' 42SP 42cm cut rotary mower, I'd suggest it's very much 'good news'. Because this new 'baby' widens the appeal of the brand considerably.

Announced at the Glee trade show last year, the four new Idea models for 2009 are aimed very much at the 'quality' end of the domestic market. This is backed up by a statement from Henton & Chattell Ltd, the UK importer and distributor, that a full after-sales and parts back-up service is seen as a key part of its mission – underlining the issues we were talking about earlier. If a battle line over 'quality' needs to be drawn in the sand, the key questions you need to ask any potential supplier are: Where is it made? And can I get it serviced, or fixed if it goes wrong?

The smaller the machine – in diameter of cut terms – the harder the balance between 'quality' and 'price' becomes, of course. The 'budget' Idea models come with a

two-year warranty, while the heavier-duty Ibea products have a three-year 'domestic use' warranty – which may suit you better. But if we were looking for a 'USP' here, I'd suggest it's the clever mix of innovative design features and ease of use that makes the 42SP worth a closer look.

For a start... Well, starting the 158cc Briggs & Stratton four-stroke '500-Series' engine couldn't be easier – all it takes is two or three 'squeezes' of the flexible bulb to prime the fuel, a gentle tug on the recoil start cord and the engine settles down to a steady 'thrum'. No need to worry about choke or throttle settings. And no worries about it running away with you, if you're not as fit as you think you are – 3.5kph is just right.

Features include deck 'overlap' outside of the axle track enabling you to cut right up to borders and a domed cut design enables you to cut-and-collect, or mulch with the same blade. If there's a moan, it's that the mulching 'plug' is fiddly to fit – somewhere to store it on the machine would be useful, too.

But on the plus side, I liked the way the machine folds for storage, or transport.

● Ibea range available from: Henton & Chattell Ltd, Nottingham. Price of 42cm (16-inch) cut 'Idea 42SP' as tested, £269.56 (non-driven 42P version £226.08). The 47cm cut (18-inch) 'Idea 4727SP' is £313.03 (Non-driven 47P version £252.17). Other pedestrian and ride-on models available - including roller mowers. For more product information, nearest dealer location and prospective new dealer business opportunities, call 0115 986 2161.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Malcolm demonstrates the Ibea 'Idea' 42SP; the grass collector; the washdown port; it is easy to start; a view of the cutting blade

## FACTFILE

- A 16-inch cut, steel deck rotary mower with mulching capability. Light, flexible 55-litre grass collector.
- Powered by easy-to-start four-stroke Briggs & Stratton engine. Single-speed driven wheels.
- Single front/rear deck height adjuster for each axle. 24 to 76mm cut range.



## STRONG POINTS

- 'Fixable', light and easy to use. Deck 'overlap' a great idea. Two-year warranty.
- Washdown hose port (with engine running) helps airflow performance by keeping inside of deck clean.
- Simple controls. Lightweight. Ideal for the non-technical. If it won't start, it's out of petrol!